
Israeli tanks and soldiers are beginning to withdraw from Gaza and life in the Strip is beginning to return to some sort of normality, as a tense calm follows three weeks of fighting between Israel and Hamas. Our correspondent Christian Fraser reports from Gaza City:

There were traffic jams on the road north, families **heading to** Gaza City to reunite with friends and relatives. Long lines of cars backed up at the **makeshift** roadblocks the Israelis have left behind. But the tanks are gone, only the deep tracks remain.

There were buildings **pitted with** Israeli tank rounds; from the holes that have been punched in the walls it was clear there had also been **snipers** waiting for them. North of Khan Younis we saw some of the Qassam fighters returning home, their rifles **slung lazily around** their shoulders.

The destruction we've seen has largely been **inflicted on** the Hamas infrastructure: police stations, **military outposts**, government buildings, so far the most extensive damage - that at the border in Rafah where **nothing was spared**.

For three weeks the Israelis pounded the tunnels that run beneath the perimeter wall but last night we met people who insist that some of these tunnels are still open and still some fuel is being pumped from the Egyptian side; impossible for us **to verify** independently, but they say they are **determined** to reopen them and to dig them deeper. If the border crossings remain close, say the Palestinians, these tunnels are their only link to the outside world.

Christian Fraser, BBC News, Gaza

Vocabulary and definitions

heading to	moving towards
makeshift	temporary
pitted with	with many small holes caused by
snipers	people whose task it is to shoot other people from a hidden location
slung lazily around	not being used but hanging over
inflicted on	caused/done to
military outposts	small military bases in remote areas or different country
nothing was spared	everything was severely damaged
to verify	to check
determined	very firm in their desire to do something and not letting anyone or any difficulties stop them

More on this story: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7836869.stm

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2009/01/090119_gaza.shtml